

pre-baiting with wheat grains for collecting rodents on a waste land of the Punjab Agricultural University area, Ludhiana (30° 56'N, 75° 52'E). This waste land (c. an acre) is present in the middle of crop fields of the University and contains quite sandy soil on which mainly Wild Thatching Grass, *Saccharum spontaneum* grows. The waste land has an established colony of the Indian Gerbilles. In one of the traps, on 2 February 1985 at about 1130 hr, one dead Grey Quail *Coturnix coturnix* was found. It was an adult male with fully ossified skull and testes fully developed. It had been gnawed at by a pair of adult Indian Gerbilles (male body weight 160 g, female body weight 150 g) caught in the same trap. Eaten parts of the body of quail were: hind legs

(tarsus and toes), neck, a small portion of skull where the first vertebra attaches, upper parts of breast and a small portion of keel. Remaining body parts of the quail weighed 33.5 g whereas average body weight of an adult is around 47 g (average of five Grey Quails captured from the same waste land).

This is a case of incidental predation under confined conditions but support the observations recorded by Prater (1971). The occurrence of this phenomenon in nature is yet to be established but it may be expected that the Indian Gerbilles can kill and eat small ground birds if they are sick or for some reason unable to protect themselves at night when the former remains active in search of food.

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#### REFERENCE

PRATER, S. H. (1971): The Book of Indian Animals. Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay.

#### 7. A COMMON SANDGROUSE'S REACTION TO A SHORT-TOED EAGLE

On 30 June 1983, near Nanaj, Solapur, we were searching for the Great Indian Bustard, when we saw a big whitish bird on the ground about 700 metres away, which we first thought to be a bustard. However, looking through a telescope revealed that it was a Short-toed Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*) facing us and eating something. When we went nearer, the eagle flew carrying a part of the prey. However, we found one leg and a wing of Common Sandgrouse (*Pterocles exustus*). Feathers including down feathers were scattered, indicating that it was a young sandgrouse. While

collecting the remains of the unfortunate victim, we saw an adult sandgrouse sitting immobile about a metre from the place where the eagle was seen eating its prey. The adult sandgrouse was so terrified that it did not fly away while we were collecting feathers and taking notes. However, it flew away when one of us touched it. We think it was the parent of the juvenile which froze when the eagle caught the young one. After finishing its meal, the eagle could have easily caught the adult sandgrouse, if we had not gone there or perhaps it would have missed the immobile adult.

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8. AN ABNORMAL BEHAVIOUR BY A BREEDING PAIR OF  
BLUE ROCK PIGEON (*COLUMBA LIVIA* GMELIN)

While studying the breeding behaviour of Blue Rock pigeon (*Columba livia* Gmelin) at Sector 18, Chandigarh (India), a strange behaviour was exhibited by a breeding pair which is worth recording.

A pair of *Columba livia* started constructing a nest on a ledge of a Verandah on 27-1-82 in a house. The nest was completed by the breeding pair on 5-2-82. Against the usual clutch of two eggs, only one was laid on 8-2-82. On 25th February, 1982, the egg hatched between 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Brooding (of hatchling) continued during the day and night of 25-2-82. On 26th February, 1982, the one-day old chick, was seen to be thrown on to the ground along with some nesting material at 1.30 p.m. by one of the breeding partners. The hatchling along with the some fallen nesting material was placed back on its original nesting site at 2.30 p.m. The bird returned to the nest at 3.15 p.m. and again started pushing off the nest along with the chick but before it could fall down, the bird

was chased off and the chick placed at a safer position in the nest. The bird returned again at 4.35 p.m. but did not bother about the chick and instead started picking up the nesting material from the abandoned nest to construct a new nest at about  $\frac{1}{2}$  meter away from the previous nest. The fallen sticks were also picked up and used in the new nest. The bird left the nest at 6.25 p.m. for roosting, leaving the chick unattended. On 27-2-82, the pair returned to the nest at 8.30 a.m., and indulged in courtship and then selected another nesting site about 3 metres away from the deserted nest but on the same ledge. The chick died on 28-2-82, when it was picked up and preserved in 90% alcohol. The new nest construction was still underway on 6-3-82 but at a slow pace when the junior author left the place due to unavoidable reasons.

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